

Montana Promotion Division Crisis Communication Action Plan

Purpose:

The purpose of the Montana Promotion Division (MPD) Crisis Communication Action Plan is to provide effective and constructive communication with the traveling public, Montanans, MPD's tourism and recreation industry partners and media during crisis situations that affect or have the potential to affect Montana's image and experience as a visitor destination. Through this plan, MPD will strive to provide its partners and the public a unified, consistent message regarding Montana's tourism and recreation opportunities to mitigate the negative impacts during crisis situations.

For purposes of this plan, effective communication provides the target audience with:

- Accurate, timely information about the crisis' impact on public access to the state's tourism and recreation opportunities in the immediate and surrounding areas.
- Accurate, timely information about the state's tourism and recreation opportunities unaffected by the crisis situation.
- Accurate, timely information that is non-threatening and helps visitors continue their Montana travel plans.
- Useful public safety information.
- Identification and promotion of official information sources providing regularly updated information regarding the crisis situation and its influence.

It will be standard operating procedure for MPD to work with crisis area partners in gathering, coordinating and distributing information required for effective communication. As part of this cooperative effort, MPD can serve as a broadly-focused public information tool for agencies and entities whose primary focus is resolving crisis situations.

Every crisis is different. Each will have unique or unexpected circumstances that may require variations to this action plan. MPD's response to any given

crisis situation, while following general guidelines, will also be flexible enough to accommodate changing or unforeseen circumstances.

Before Crisis Happens:

Developing and maintaining MPD's Crisis Communication Action Plan is the responsibility of the Division's Public Information Officer (PIO). S/he will coordinate these efforts with the Division Administrator, staff and partners.

The action plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that:

- The plan is current and utilizes all appropriate resources of MPD.
- Information distribution lists and partner contacts are current and comprehensive.
- Division staff are aware of the plan and understand their program's part in implementing it.
- Financial and technical resources are available to carry out the plan.

Who Determines That A Crisis Exists?

The Montana Promotion Division (MPD) Crisis Communication Action Plan will be implemented when appropriate state officials, i.e., Governor's Office, Montana Commerce Department Director, or MPD Administrator, determine that a crisis situation exists that affects or threatens to affect Montana's image and experience as a visitor destination causing a negative impact on Montana's tourism and recreation industry.

When Crisis Happens, What Will We Do?

Crisis Response Team:

Once a crisis is officially declared, the Montana Promotion Division Administrator or their designee will organize and direct the activities of a crisis response team made up of Division staff. The team will involve Division staff responsible for the following programs:

- Public Information Officer (compiling data, overseeing MPD communications with public, news media and other audiences)
- Information Services (websites, broadcast email to travel database)
- Publicity Program (Montana, regional and national travel and news media, contracted public relations agencies)
- Consumer Marketing (contracted advertising agencies, TIA)
- Group Marketing Manager (Group Tours, ABA, NTA)
- Overseas Marketing Manager (RMI and overseas offices)
- Industry Services (Fulfillment, Call Center, Tourism Regions, CVBs, TAC)
- Tourism Development & Education (Montana Tourism & Recreation Initiative, Visitor Information Centers)

The MPD crisis response team will meet and work on a schedule developed by the Division Administrator.

The crisis response team will first define the scope of the crisis including: type, extent, potential duration and impact on Montana's tourism industry.

Once the scope of the crisis is defined, the Division Administrator will assign specific crisis response team member duties based on the following list of MPD responsibilities:

- Work with local crisis area partners to gather timely, accurate information regarding the crisis situation and its influence on public access to Montana's tourism and recreation resources and services.
- Distribute timely, accurate, non-threatening information on the crisis situation, its influence, and unaffected tourism and recreation opportunities to the general public, MPD's tourism and recreation industry and agency partners, elected officials, news media, and other appropriate entities that will share this information with visitors, potential visitors and Montana residents.
- Assist the Division Administrator or their designee in developing materials needed to serve as a statewide tourism and recreation industry spokesperson regarding the crisis situation.
- Monitor crisis impacts on Montana's tourism and recreation industry, visitors and residents.

How Will We Do This?

Gathering Information:

MPD will work with its partners in the crisis area (tourism regions, convention and visitor bureaus, contracted agencies, public agencies and others):

- To identify the best primary source(s) of official information regarding the crisis and its influences on public access, safety and services.
- To develop a local action plan determining:
 - Who will collect the official crisis information and how often.
 - Need for editing/formatting official information before distribution and who will do that.
 - How and how often the official information will be distributed to MPD and the other partners.
 - How and how often MPD and the partners will distribute the official information to the public and other appropriate contacts.
 - The audience or contacts each partner will be responsible for distributing information to.
 - How and how often the partners will meet to review the crisis situation and effectiveness of the crisis communication response.
 - Costs associated with this effort and each partners' technical and financial resources available to offset or cover these costs.
- To develop speaking points on the crisis situation to be used by spokespersons for the partner agencies and organizations, and shared with the Governor's Office, Commerce Director, Disaster and Emergency Services, State PIO network, and other appropriate contacts.

Distributing Information:

MPD will employ its electronic communication resources in distributing crisis situation updates or links to primary information sources. These electronic communication resources include:

- MPD Consumer websites, primarily www.visitmt.com
- E-mail distribution lists involving state, regional, national and international contacts (state and federal elected and agency officials, news and travel media, travel industry organizations and associations, visitor information centers, Montana tourism and recreation industry and others)

MPD may employ other communication tools as appropriate. These include:

- Press releases
- Public Service Announcements
- Press conferences
- Media interviews
- Podcasts
- Advertising campaigns

MPD's use of its communication tools will be coordinated, as much as possible, with the partner organizations and entities involved in the crisis communication efforts. Coordination will focus on ensuring that accurate, consistent, non-threatening information is being communicated and available to all partners.

Monitoring the Crisis' Influence:

MPD will use its visitor inquiry services (internet webmaster, call center, front desk staff, and visitor information center staff) to monitor visitor awareness of and concern for the crisis. This information will assist MPD and its partners in the development of information useful to public understanding of the crisis situation and its influence on access to Montana's tourism and recreation opportunities and services. MPD program managers responsible for the following areas will establish a regular reporting mechanism on visitor awareness and concern regarding the crisis:

- Call Center Travel Counselors (1-800-VISIT-MT)
- MPD Front Office Staff (800-548-3390 ext. #2, 406-841-2870)
- MPD Webmaster (webmaster@visitmt.com)
- MPD Visitor Information Center Staff (St. Regis, Lolo Pass, Dillon, West Yellowstone, Hardin, Broadus, Wibaux, Culbertson, Shelby)

The MPD Administrator or their designee will determine the frequency of the reports and their distribution.

As resources allow, MPD will monitor state, regional and national media coverage of the crisis situation. Responses and corrections to media reports will be prepared and delivered as warranted.

MPD will work through local and regional partners to gather information on crisis situation impacts on the state's tourism and recreation industry.

After the Crisis is Over

Recovery Plans:

Once the crisis situation is resolved, the MPD Administrator and designated staff will assess the impact of the crisis on Montana's image and experience as a visitor destination and determine the level of response, if any, required for recovery from the impacts. MPD will share this assessment with its crisis communication partners and discuss their assessments.

If a response is necessary, MPD will join with its crisis communication partners to:

- Plan the development and implementation of a response.
- Identify the financial and technical resources needed for the response.
- Identify the resources each partner can contribute to the response.
- Develop a mechanism to measure the effectiveness of the response.

When the crisis is resolved, MPD and their crisis response partners will conduct a debriefing process to evaluate the response. From this process, the partners can adjust or refine their communication plans for future use, if needed.

Lower Level Crisis Response:

Not every crisis is a major situation requiring a full implementation of MPD's Crisis Communication Action Plan by MPD. If, after the initial

notification, the MPD Administrator and staff determine the situation can be handled without employing all the staff resources, a more conservative approach to crisis communication management will be taken. That approach, however, will include many of the elements referenced in this plan, such as crafting key messages, identifying target audiences and employing the best media vehicles to reach those audiences.